



**United
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Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

World Population Policies 2019

Highlights



Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Population Division

World Population Policies 2019

Highlights



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The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

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The term “country” as used in this report also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas.

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Preface

This publication presents the highlights of the report *World Population Policies 2019*. It provides an overview of policies to govern regular migration and to address irregular migration and reviews an array of policy measures related to migrants' rights, including access to services, as well as policies to foster the integration of migrants into host societies. It also examines Government measures to maximize the development impacts of migration and to support diaspora populations.

World Population Policies 2019 presents the official Government responses to the module on international migration (module III) of the United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development (the "Twelfth Inquiry"). The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been implementing the Inquiry every five years since 1963 as part of its mandate to monitor population policies at the global level.

Responsibility for these highlights rests with the Population Division. Preparation of these highlights was facilitated by the cooperation of Member States and non-member States of the United Nations, the regional commissions and other partners. Specifically, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) assisted in gathering Government responses to the international migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) supported efforts to collect responses from its member countries.

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World Population Policies 2019:

Key messages

1. Institutions to promote migration governance are widespread. Among the 111 Governments that replied to the module on international migration of the Twelfth Inquiry, more than nine out of ten (92 per cent) reported having a dedicated Government agency to implement national migration policy. Ninety-one per cent of these Governments reported having an interministerial coordination mechanism on migration to promote coherence across levels of government and policy sectors.

2. Whole-of-government or evidence-based policies are also common, but less widespread. In 2019, three fourths of the responding Governments reported having a mechanism to ensure that migration policy is informed by data, appropriately disaggregated, or having an annual national report on migration that includes data collected by the Government or other sources. Formal mechanisms to ensure that migration policy is gender responsive were less prevalent (54 per cent).

3. Most Governments have measures to promote cooperation and partnerships. Ninety per cent of Governments with available data indicated that they have bilateral agreements on migration. Formal mechanisms to engage civil society and the private sector in the formulation and implementation of migration policies were reported by 74 per cent of these Governments.

4. Few Governments are seeking to lower immigration through regular, or legal, channels. In 2019, 37 per cent of the 111 responding Governments reported having policies to raise levels of immigration through regular channels, while 26 per cent reported policies to maintain current levels. Only 3 per cent had policies to lower their current immigration levels, while 34 per cent had either no policy or no data on such measures.

5. Irregular migration is considered a matter of concern by Governments of all but five countries. Globally, 68 per cent of the 111 responding Governments viewed irregular migration to their country as a major concern; another 25 per cent viewed it as a minor concern; nearly 5 per cent had no information; while nearly 3 per cent did not consider irregular migration to be a matter of concern.

6. Promoting orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration is a priority for most Governments. Globally, 84 per cent of Governments with available data reported having provisions for the arrival of unaccompanied or separated minors; 80 per cent reported having information and awareness-raising campaigns for prospective migrants; 76 had pre-arrival authorization controls; while 75 per cent indicated having a system to monitor international migrants who overstay their visas.

7. Nearly all Governments have formal strategies to address human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In 2019, more than nine out of ten responding Governments reported having policy measures to prevent trafficking in persons or to protect or assist the victims of human trafficking (95 per cent each). Measures to prosecute or criminalize human trafficking were reported by 93 per cent of these Governments.

8. Most Governments have measures to address the mobility dimensions of crises. Globally, more than four fifths of Governments with available data reported having a system for receiving, processing and identifying those forced to flee across international borders (84 per cent) or for granting permission for temporary stay or temporary protection for those forcibly displaced across international borders who are unable to return (84 per cent). A smaller proportion of these Governments (56 per cent)

reported having a national disaster risk reduction strategy with specific provisions for addressing the displacement impacts of disasters.

9. Policy measures to protect migrant rights vary widely. In 2019, more than four fifths of the responding Governments indicated that they provided non-nationals with equal access to essential or emergency health care (86 per cent) or justice (82 per cent) regardless of their legal immigration status. Most of these Governments also reported providing equal access to public education (62 per cent) regardless of immigration status. Government measures to promote equal work for equal pay regardless of immigration status, or to provide social security benefits to migrants on par with those received by nationals, were less prevalent (39 per cent and 22 per cent,

respectively).

10. Further steps are needed to promote the socio-economic well-being of migrants.

Globally, 81 per cent of Governments with available data reported having policy measures to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad, 78 per cent reported having measures to promote fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers, while 67 per cent responded that they have measures to facilitate or promote the flow of remittances. Measures to align labour migration policies with actual and projected labour market needs were reported by 66 per cent of the 111 Governments, while 60 per cent indicated that they have measures to facilitate the portability of social security benefits.

Introduction

In 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide reached 272 million, up from 221 million in 2010 (United Nations, 2019a). People migrate for many reasons, including to search for jobs or education or to make a better future for themselves and their families. At the same time, political conflict, poverty, inequality and a lack of sustainable livelihoods continue to compel many people to leave their homes and undertake dangerous and sometimes fatal journeys.

International migration has a significant impact on countries of origin and destination. In 2018, migrant remittances reached an estimated US\$688 billion globally (World Bank, 2019). Remittances improve the livelihoods of families and communities in countries of origin through investments in education, health, sanitation, housing and other infrastructure. Countries of destination also benefit significantly from migration, as migrants often fill critical labour gaps, create jobs as entrepreneurs, and pay taxes and contribute to social security programmes.

Despite the significant benefits of migration, international migrants remain among the most vulnerable members of society. Migrants in irregular situations are especially vulnerable to discrimination and abuse. Migrants, particularly women and children, may fall victim to human trafficking. Racial, ethnic and religious profiling of migrants, as well as instances of systematic intolerance and xenophobia, constitute barriers to their integration and full participation in society.

When supported by appropriate policies, international migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. Target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a non-legally binding framework for international cooperation among all relevant actors on migration, also recognized that migration is a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable

development and that these positive impacts can be optimized by improving migration governance.

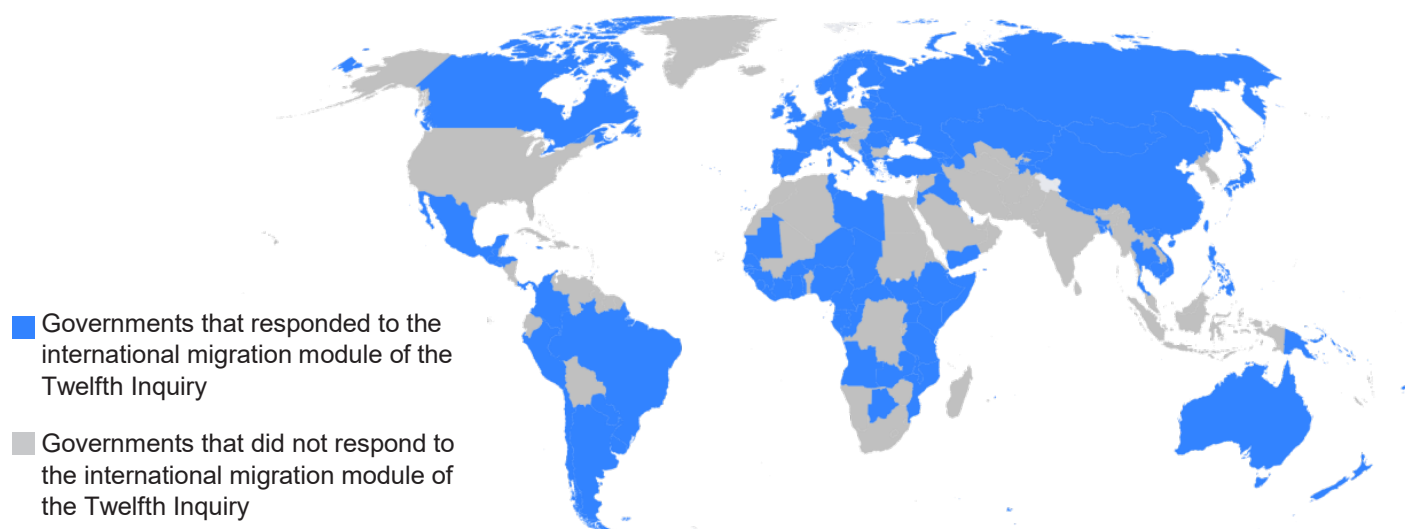
Data for *World Population Policies 2019* were collected through the United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development (the “Twelfth Inquiry”). The Inquiry has been used to survey population policies, including policies on international migration, since 1963. The Twelfth Inquiry was administered between September 2018 and August 2019 and was sent to all Member States and non-member States of the United Nations.¹ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) assisted in gathering Government responses to the international migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry.

The analysis presented in this report is based on data for 111 countries that had responded to the international migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry by September 2019 (map 1). The availability of information on migration policies varies by region.

This publication presents the highlights of the report *World Population Policies 2019*. It provides an overview of Government policies and programmes related to international migration, including policies to govern immigration and to address irregular migration. It reviews policy measures related to migrants’ rights, including access to services, as well as policies to foster the integration of migrants into host societies. It also examines Government measures to maximize the development impacts of migration and to support diaspora investment and migrant return.

¹ These comprise 193 Member States, 2 observer States (Holy See, State of Palestine) and 2 non-member States (Cook Islands, Niue).

Map1.

Governments that responded to the international migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry by September 2019

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

International migration governance

International migration is a multidimensional reality that individual States cannot address alone. Instead, it requires cooperation and dialogue between and among countries in order to maximize the benefits of migration and reduce its costs for both countries of origin and countries of destination, as well as for migrants and their families. In addition, it requires a complex framework of institutions, laws and policy measures to ensure coherence across all policy sectors and levels of government. Cooperation and partnership with relevant stakeholders, including migrants, civil society, diaspora organizations and the private sector, are also essential for ensuring that migration governance takes place in an inclusive and comprehensive manner, addressing migration in all its dimensions for all migrants.

Institutions to promote migration governance are widespread

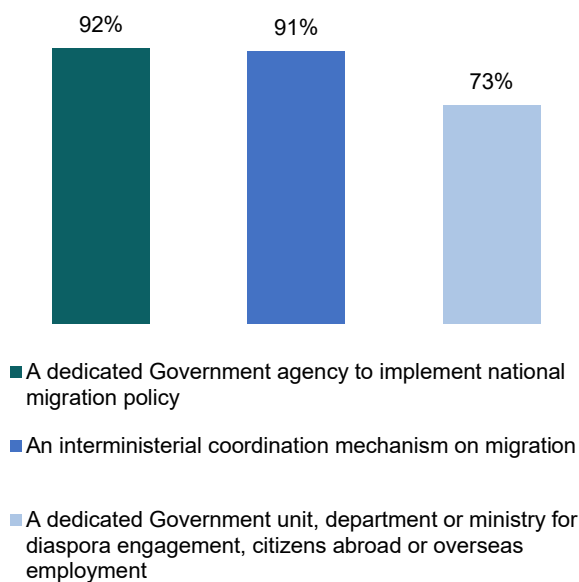
Nearly all of the 111 Governments that responded to the module on international migration of the Twelfth Inquiry reported having a dedicated Government agency to implement national migration policy (92 per cent) (figure 1). In addition, 91 per cent reported having an interministerial coordination mechanism on migration to promote coherence across levels of government and policy sectors (table A.1). Around three fourths of the responding Governments indicated that they had a dedicated Government unit, department or ministry for diaspora engagement, citizens abroad or overseas employment (73 per cent). A diaspora is broadly defined as the collection of individuals, and their networks, associations and communities, who have left a shared country of origin but maintain links with each other and their homeland.

While institutions to govern migration are widespread, gaps in national migration governance persist, particularly among some of the countries with large diaspora populations. Of the 32 countries hosting 1 million or more international migrants that replied to the migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry, all but two (thus, 94 per cent) reported having a dedicated mechanism to implement a

national migration policy. However, among the 40 countries providing data that had a diaspora of 1 million or more, only 31 (or 78 per cent) reported having a dedicated Government entity for diaspora engagement.

Among development groups, less developed countries excluding the least developed countries will be home to more than two-thirds of the world's older population (1.1 billion) in 2050. The fastest increase of the older population between 2019 and 2050 is projected to happen in the least developed countries (+225 per cent), rising from 37 million in 2019 to 120 million persons aged 65 years or over in 2050.

Figure 1.
Percentage of Governments that reported having institutions to govern migration, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.1.

Many countries do not have formal mechanisms to promote gender-responsive migration policies

Around half of Governments with available data (54 per cent) reported having formal mechanisms to ensure that migration policy is gender responsive (table A.1). While gender-responsive migration policies are widespread in many regions, formal mechanisms are still missing in a large number of countries, including many where women and girls outnumber men and boys in the migrant population. Among countries hosting more female than male migrants, 40 per cent of those with available data did not have any formal mechanism to ensure that migration policy is gender responsive.

Whole-of-government or evidence-based policies are also common, but less widespread

Among the Governments that provided information in 2019, three fourths indicated that they had a mechanism to ensure that migration policy is informed by data, disaggregated by age, sex, migration status, geographic location, income, education level and other relevant characteristics (table A.1). Yet in many countries, the availability and timeliness of data on the number and basic characteristics of international migrants are still inadequate to support evidence-based policy

making. Among the 85 countries that reported having a mechanism to ensure that migration policy is informed by data, 26 per cent did not have recent data on the total number of international migrants living in the country,² 38 per cent did not have recent data on the age of migrants, and 32 per cent were missing recent information about a migrant's country of origin (United Nations, 2019a).

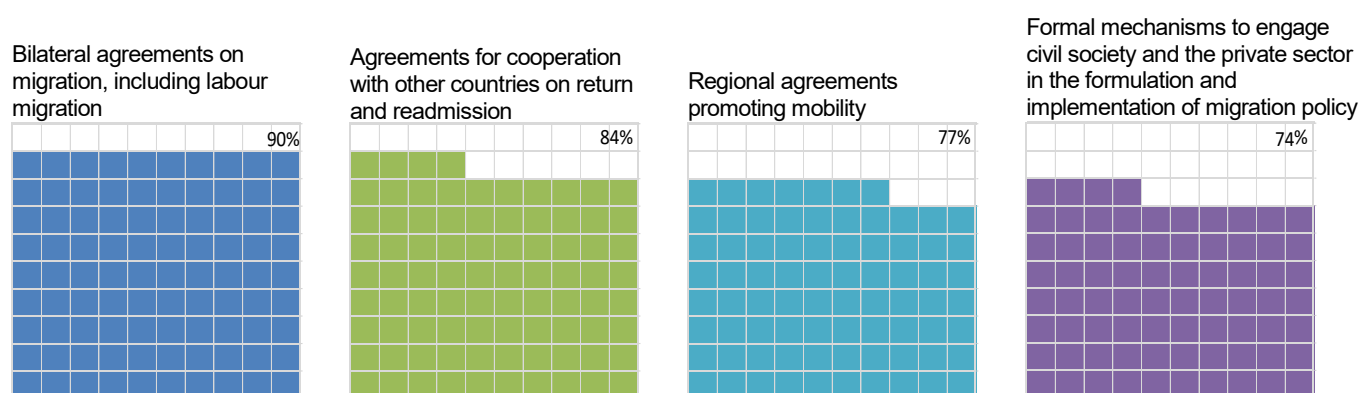
Most Governments have measures to promote cooperation and partnerships

Ninety per cent of Governments that responded to module III of the Twelfth Inquiry reported having bilateral agreements on migration (figure 2), while 84 per cent reported having agreements for cooperation with other countries on return and readmission. In addition, 77 per cent of the countries reported being party to regional agreements to promote mobility. Formal mechanisms to engage civil society and the private sector in the formulation and implementation of migration policies were reported by 74 per cent of the Governments (table A.2).

² Recent data refers to having at least one official empirical data source providing information on the number of international migrants, defined either by place of birth or citizenship, dating from the year 2010 or later.

Figure 2.

Percentage of Governments that reported having measures to foster cooperation among countries and encouraging stakeholder inclusion and participation in migration policy, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.2.

Immigration and Emigration

The volume of movements across international borders has increased manifold over the past decades (United Nations, 2019c). As the number of people moving across international borders continues to rise, the need for coherent, evidence-based policies to manage the volume, direction and composition of migration flows is greater than ever.

Few Governments are seeking to lower immigration through regular channels

In 2019, most Governments reported either having policies to raise levels of immigration through regular channels (37 per cent) or policies to maintain current levels (26 per cent) (figure 3 and table 3.A). Only 3 per cent of Governments had policies to lower their current immigration levels.

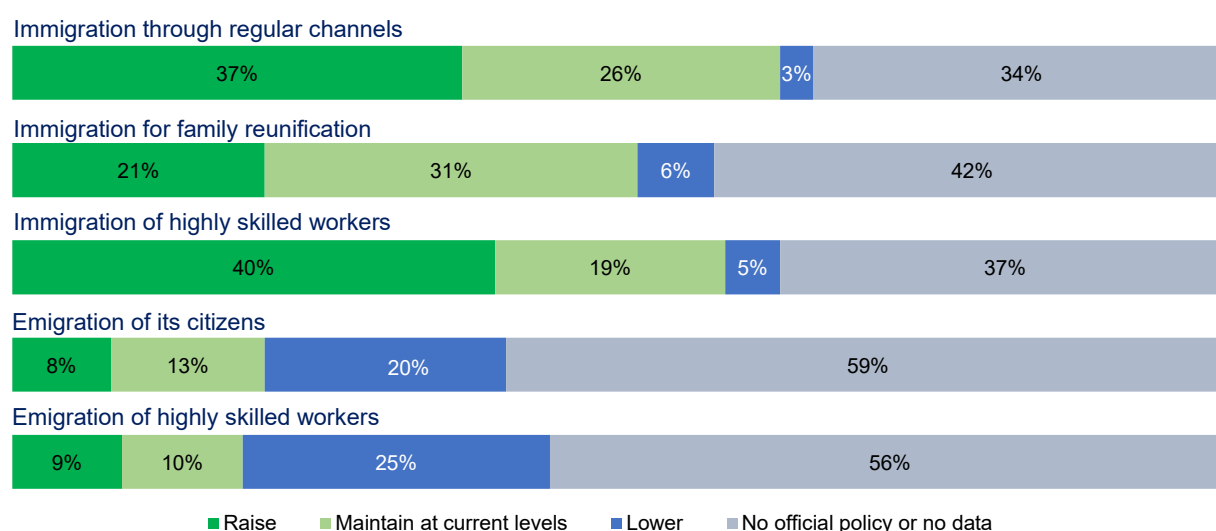
Most Governments allow immigration for the purpose of family reunification at least under certain conditions. In 2019, about three fourths of Governments reported either having policies aimed at maintaining their current level of immigration for family reunification (31 per cent) or not having a

policy to influence it (42 per cent). Only 6 per cent of Governments had policies to lower immigration for family reunification, while 21 per cent had policies to raise it.

Labour migration policies in destination countries have become increasingly selective, favouring the admission of international migrants with skills considered to be in short supply. Many countries also grant highly skilled workers preferential treatment, subjecting them to fewer restrictions than low-skilled migrants regarding admission, length of stay, change of employment and admission of family members. In 2019, the majority of Governments reported having some type of policy measure to attract highly skilled migrants. Forty per cent of Governments reported having policies to raise immigration of highly skilled workers, 5 per cent had policies to lower such inflows, and the remaining countries either had policies aimed at maintaining the current levels (19 per cent) or had no policies in place (37 per cent).

In 2019, the majority of Governments had no explicit

Figure 3.
Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures concerning the annual level of immigration or emigration, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.3.

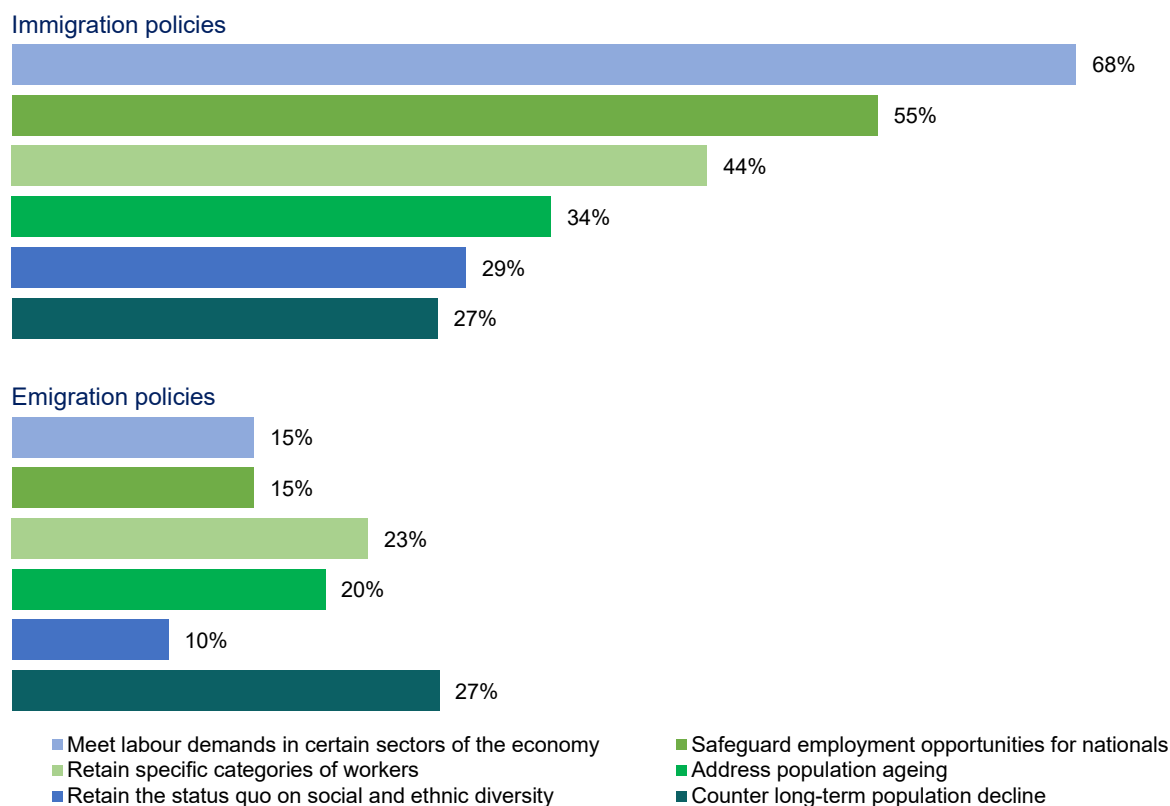
policy on the emigration of their citizens (59 per cent) or on the emigration of highly skilled workers (56 per cent). Less than one in ten Governments reported seeking to raise the level of emigration of either their citizens or highly skilled workers. By contrast, 20 per cent of Governments sought to lower the emigration of citizens and 25 per cent sought to lower the emigration of highly skilled workers.

Immigration policies generally respond to labour market needs

Countries cite a variety of underlying reasons for their current immigration and emigration policies. Among the 111 countries with data in 2019, 68 per cent identified meeting labour market demands as an underlying reason for their current immigration policy (figure 4 and table A.4).

A large share of Governments also viewed immigration policy as a tool to safeguard employment opportunities for their nationals (55 per cent) or retain specific categories of workers (44 per cent). Demographic drivers were cited as a rationale by around one third of responding Governments, with 34 per cent pursuing their current immigration policy to address population ageing and 27 per cent to counter long-term population decline. In terms of the rationale for current emigration policies, countering long-term population decline was the most widely cited reason (27 per cent), followed by retaining specific categories of workers (23 per cent) and addressing population ageing (20 per cent).

Figure 4.
Percentage of Governments by major underlying reasons for adopting current migration policies, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.4.

Irregular migration

Irregular migration poses multiple challenges to countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as to migrants themselves. Migrants in irregular situations are often vulnerable to discrimination and abuse and are at risk of being exploited by transnational criminal networks involved in human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Irregular migration is considered a matter of concern by Governments of all but five countries

Globally, 68 per cent of Governments that provided information to the Twelfth Inquiry viewed irregular migration in their countries as a major concern, another 25 per cent viewed it as a minor concern, nearly 5 per cent had no information, while nearly 3 per cent did not consider irregular migration to be a matter of concern (table A.5). Irregular migration was a major concern for 69 per cent of countries hosting one million or more international migrants in 2019.

Promoting orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration is a priority for most Governments

Among the policy measures to address irregular immigration and promote regular migration, 84 per cent of Governments reported having provisions for unaccompanied or separated minors, while 80 per cent of Governments reported having information

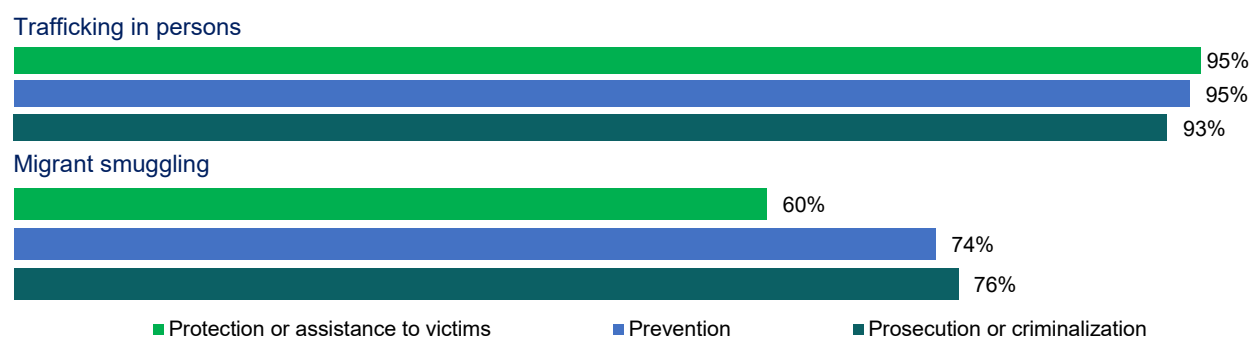
and awareness-raising campaigns (see table A.6). These included government websites, awareness-raising events or training on topics related to pre- and post-arrival in destination countries or after return. Eighty per cent of Governments also reported having penalties for employers of migrants in an irregular situation; while 76 per cent had pre-arrival authorization controls. Seventy-five per cent of Governments indicated that they had a system to monitor visa overstays or used fines or detention of migrants in an irregular situation. Sixty-five per cent of Governments reported facilitating the regularization of their legal status

Nearly all Governments have formal strategies to address human trafficking and migrant smuggling

More than nine out of ten of the responding Governments reported having policy measures to prevent trafficking in persons or to protect or assist the victims of human trafficking (95 per cent each) (figure 5 and table A.7). Measures to prosecute or criminalize human trafficking were reported by 93 per cent of Governments. Prosecution and criminalization were the most frequently reported measures adopted by Governments to combat migrant smuggling (76 per cent), followed by prevention (74 per cent). Measures to protect or assist victims were the least prevalent, reported by 60 per cent of Governments in 2019.

Figure 5.

Percentage of Governments that reported having measures to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.7.



Malagasy migrant (nurse) works in Mauritius, 2017, IOM / Natalie Oren

Forced migration

Most Governments have measures to address the mobility dimensions of crises

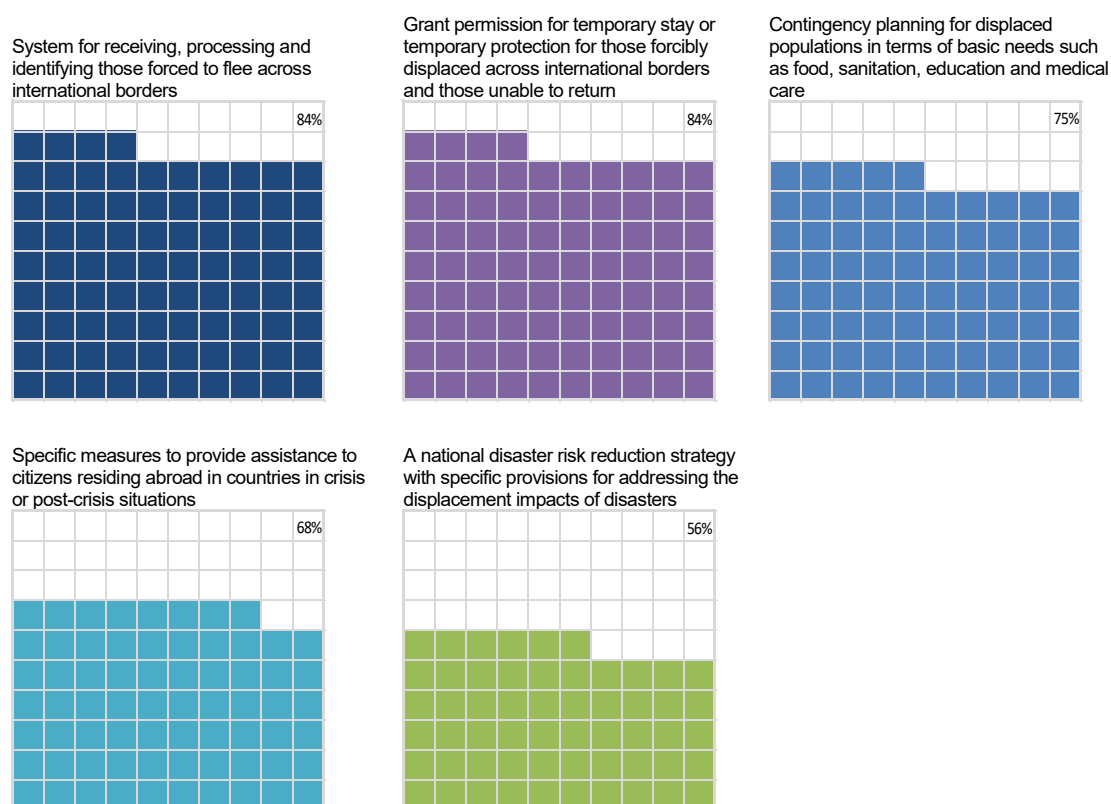
Globally, more than four fifths of Governments that responded to the Twelfth Inquiry module on international migration in 2019 reported having a system for receiving, processing and identifying those forced to flee across international borders (84 per cent) or granting permission for temporary stay or protection for those forcibly displaced across international borders and those unable to return (84 per cent) (figure 6 and table A.8). Seventy-five per cent of Governments reported having contingency plans for displaced populations in terms of basic needs such as food, sanitation, education and medical care, while 68 per cent reported specific

measures to assist citizens residing abroad in countries in crisis or post-crisis situations. A much lower proportion of Governments (56 per cent) reported having a national disaster risk reduction strategy with specific provisions for addressing the displacement impacts of disasters, whether natural or man-made.

In addition to these policy measures, most countries have ratified the key international legal instruments for the protection of refugees. As of December 2019, the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol had been ratified by 146 and 147 Member States of the United Nations, respectively.

Figure 6.

Percentage of Governments that reported having measures to respond to refugees and other persons forcibly displaced across international borders, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.8.



Construction site employing internal migrant workers from the countryside. Beijing, China. ILO/Crozet M.

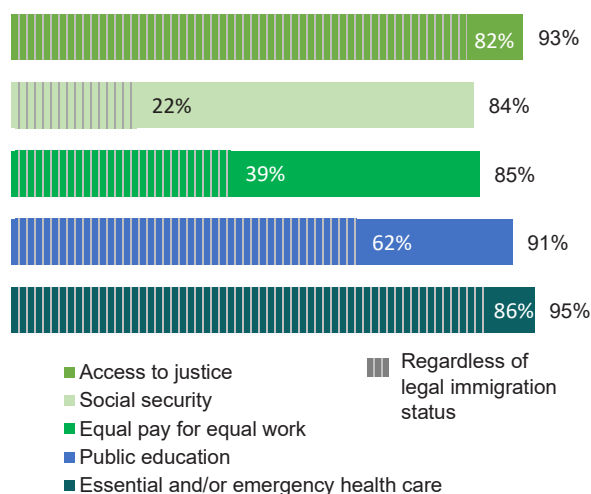
Migration rights and integration

The respect, protection and fulfilment of migrant rights, regardless of migration status, are essential for ensuring that migrants become active, empowered and well-integrated members of societies. Many host countries have undertaken measures to minimize disparities between migrants and nationals and to facilitate migrant integration.

Policy measures to protect migrant rights vary widely

Among countries that provided data in 2019, policy measures to protect migrants' rights and ensure their access to basic and essential services varied widely (figure 7 and table A.9). Globally, 95 per cent of the Governments reported having policies to provide foreign citizens with equal access to essential or emergency health care. Eighty-six per cent of Governments provided such services to all non-nationals, regardless of immigration status, while 8 per cent provided them only to those with a legal status.

Figure 7.
Percentage of Governments that reported providing non-nationals equal access to services, welfare benefits and rights, by legal immigration status, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.9.

Ninety-three per cent of Governments with available data indicated that they ensured equal access to justice for non-nationals. Eighty-two per cent of the Governments reported having policies to provide equal access to justice for non-nationals regardless of immigration status, while 11 per cent of Governments had such policies only for those migrants with legal immigration status.

Ninety-one per cent of Governments reported having measures to provide equal access to public education; this included 62 per cent that provided the same level of access to public education for all migrants and 29 per cent that provided equal access to non-nationals only if they had a legal immigration status.

Government measures to promote equal pay for equal work or to provide social security on a par with citizens were somewhat less prevalent. Eighty-five per cent of Governments indicated that they had measures to ensure equal payment of salary and benefits for people in the same workplace who are doing similar work. Forty-six per cent of governments reported having measures to ensure equal payment of salary and benefits only to those with legal immigration status, while 39 per cent of governments had such policies for all migrants regardless of immigration status.

Similarly, 84 per cent of Governments had measures to provide non-nationals with equal access to social security programmes. Twenty-two per cent of Governments indicated that they provided access to social security for foreign citizens regardless of their immigration status and 62 per cent only for those with legal immigration status.

Measures to combat discrimination against migrants are widespread

In 2019, nearly three quarters of Governments reported that they provided protection and legal assistance to victims of hate crimes against migrants or criminalized public incitement of violence or hatred directed against migrants (73 per cent each) (see table A.10). In addition, 68 per cent of Governments

indicated that they counted xenophobia and racism among the aggravating circumstances of a crime, while 67 per cent indicated that they provided formal training to law enforcement and other public officials to identify, prevent and respond to hate

crimes against migrants. In 2019, 77 per cent of Governments reported having a national policy or strategy to promote the inclusion or integration of immigrants.

International migration and development

Measures to promote the socioeconomic well-being of migrants are essential for maximizing the positive development impact of migration. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes several targets related directly to international migration or migrants.

The most explicit among them is target 10.7, which calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

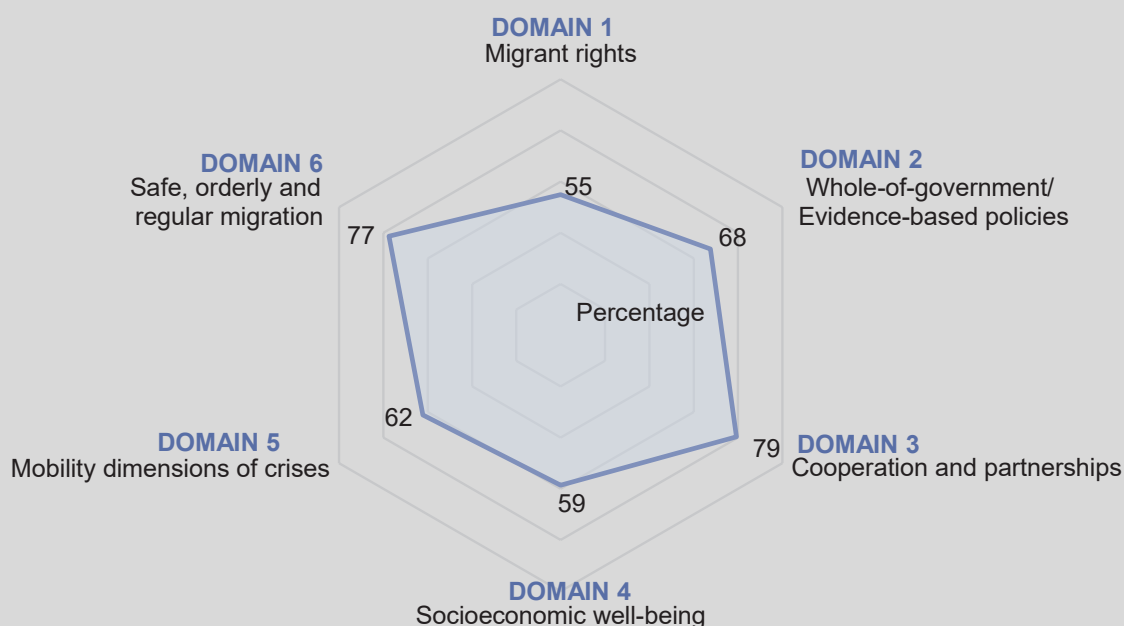
Box 1. SDG indicator 10.7.2: Number of countries with migration policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people

Globally, 54 per cent of Governments that replied to the migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry met or fully met the criteria of the indicator; defined as having policy measures to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people for 80 per cent or more of the 30 sub-categories under the six domains of the indicator.

More than three quarters of the Governments met the criteria for domain 3 “Cooperation and partnerships” (79 per cent) or domain 6 “Safe, orderly and regular migration” (77 per cent) (figure 8). Furthermore, 68 per cent of Governments met or fully met the criteria for domain 2 “Whole-of-government or evidence-based policies”, followed by 62 per cent for domain 5 “Mobility dimensions of crises”. Domain 1 “Migrant rights” and domain 4 “Socioeconomic well-being” had the lowest proportions of Governments with available data reporting a wide range of policy measures: 55 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively.

Figure 8.

Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people by domain, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division and International Organization for Migration (2019).

Notes: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). Data refer to countries that meet or fully meet the criteria for indicator 10.7.2 (reported having migration policy measures for 80 per cent or more of the five sub-categories in each domain). Of the countries that provided data, 20 per cent or more have item non-response for domain 4 of SDG indicator 10.7.2 of 10 per cent or more.

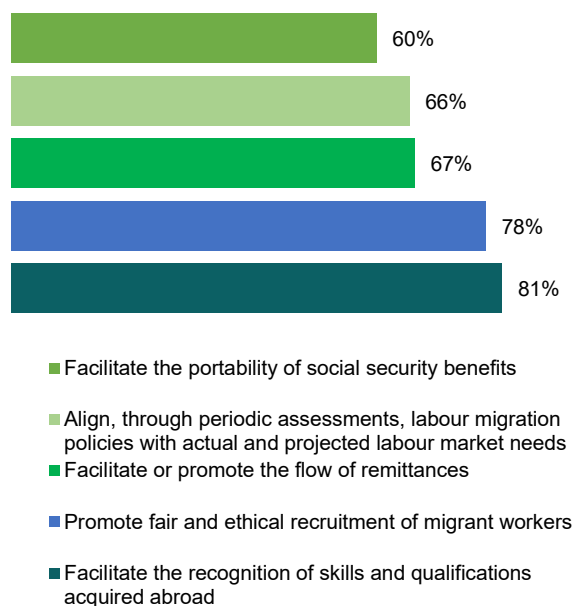
Further steps are needed to promote the socio-economic well-being of migrants

Globally, 81 per cent of the Governments that responded to the migration module of the Twelfth Inquiry reported having policies to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad, meaning that they had formalized criteria (accreditation) for recognizing foreign qualifications such as degrees, skills and competencies acquired abroad (figure 9 and table A.11).

Seventy-eight per cent of Governments indicated that they had measures to promote fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers. Sixty-seven per cent of Governments indicated that they had measures to facilitate or promote the flow of remittances through specific policy measures, meaning that they had one or more government programmes to reduce the transaction costs of remittances, increase the availability of remittance services, improve the conditions under which remittances are sent, or support financial literacy and inclusion so that remittances are better used.

Figure 9.

Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to maximize the positive development impact of migration and the socioeconomic well-being of migrants, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019). See table A.11.

Measures to align labour migration policies with actual and projected labour market needs were reported by 66 per cent of Governments providing data. Sixty per cent of Governments had measures to facilitate the portability of social security benefits, signifying that they had an agreement with at least one other country on the portability of at least one type of social security benefit.

Half of Governments had instituted one or more policy measures to encourage investment in their countries by their diaspora population

In 2019, 45 per cent of Governments reported having streamlined bureaucratic procedures to facilitate diaspora investment, while 41 per cent permitted the transfer of financial assets (table A.12). Thirty-seven per cent of Governments indicated that they had tax exemptions or provided other financial incentives specifically to their diaspora; 26 per cent gave their diaspora preferential treatment in allotment of permits or licences; while 22 per cent offered preferential treatment in providing credit.

Many Governments report having policies or programmes to encourage the return of their citizens living abroad

In 2019, 33 per cent of Governments reported having policies to raise levels of return of their citizens living abroad, compared to 1 per cent with policies to lower such flows (see table 3.A). Policies to influence levels of return of international migrants to their countries of origin were somewhat less prevalent. Twenty-three per cent of the Governments reported having policies to raise the level of migrant returns, while 25 per cent sought to maintain current levels.

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Annex tables

Table A.1. Percentage of Governments that reported having institutions, policies or strategies to govern immigration or emigration, by region, 2019

	A dedicated Government agency to implement national migration policy	A dedicated Government unit, department or ministry for diaspora engagement, citizens abroad or overseas employment	Formal mechanisms to ensure that the migration policy is gender responsive	A mechanism to ensure that migration policy is informed by data, appropriately disaggregated	An annual national report on migration that includes migration data collected by the Government and/or other sources
World	92	73	54	77	76
Sub-Saharan Africa	94	91	45	58	55
Northern Africa and Western Asia	92	67	33	83	75
Central and Southern Asia**	80	80	100	80	80
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	71	86	86	71	57
Latin America and the Caribbean*	100	79	57	79	79
Oceania	100	44	22	67	89
Europe and Northern America	90	58	65	97	97

Table A.2. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to foster cooperation among countries and encourage stakeholder inclusion and participation in migration policy, by region, 2019

	Bilateral agreements on migration, including labour migration	Regional agreements promoting mobility	Agreements for cooperation with other countries on return and readmission	Formal mechanisms to engage civil society and the private sector in the formulation and implementation of migration policy
World	90	77	84	74
Sub-Saharan Africa	85	85	85	76
Northern Africa and Western Asia	83	50	83	58
Central and Southern Asia**	100	100	80	80
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	100	86	86	71
Latin America and the Caribbean*	93	71	50	71
Oceania	78	89	78	67
Europe and Northern America	97	71	100	81

Table A.3. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures concerning the annual level of immigration, emigration and return, by region, 2019

	Immigration			Emigration		Return	
	Regular channels	Highly skilled workers	Family reunification	Citizens	Highly skilled workers	Citizens living abroad	Migrants to their countries of origin
World							
Lower	3	5	6	20	25	1	4
Maintain	26	19	31	13	10	19	25
Raise	37	40	21	8	9	33	23
No policy or no data	34	37	42	59	56	47	48
Sub-Saharan Africa							
Lower	0	9	3	21	33	0	3
Maintain	15	6	18	18	12	9	18
Raise	36	27	15	6	0	42	24
No policy or no data	48	58	64	55	55	48	55
Northern Africa and Western Asia							
Lower	0	0	0	17	25	0	0
Maintain	25	17	33	0	0	8	25
Raise	17	33	17	0	8	25	17
No policy or no data	58	50	50	83	67	67	58
Central and Southern Asia**							
Lower	0	0	0	20	40	0	0
Maintain	20	20	0	20	20	40	40
Raise	60	60	40	20	20	40	20
No policy or no data	20	20	60	40	20	20	40
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*							
Lower	0	0	0	14	14	0	14
Maintain	29	29	14	0	0	57	14
Raise	57	71	29	43	43	14	43
No policy or no data	14	0	57	43	43	29	29
Latin America and the Caribbean*							
Lower	0	0	0	21	14	0	0
Maintain	29	7	36	14	21	36	29
Raise	50	21	36	0	0	21	7
No policy or no data	21	71	29	64	64	43	64
Oceania							
Lower	0	22	22	0	22	0	0
Maintain	44	33	33	11	11	22	44
Raise	33	33	22	22	22	22	11
No policy or no data	22	11	22	67	44	56	44
Europe and Northern America							
Lower	10	0	13	26	23	3	6
Maintain	32	32	48	13	6	13	26
Raise	32	55	16	3	10	39	32
No policy or no data	26	13	23	58	61	45	35

Table A.4. Percentage of Governments by major underlying reasons for setting current migration policies, by region, 2019

	Counter long-term population decline	Address population ageing	Meet labour demands in certain sectors of the economy	Safeguard employment opportunities for nationals	Retain specific categories of workers	Retain the status quo on social and ethnic diversity
World						
Immigration policy	27	34	68	55	44	29
Emigration policy	27	20	15	15	23	10
Sub-Saharan Africa						
Immigration policy	24	39	55	55	48	42
Emigration policy	30	18	15	18	33	21
Northern Africa and Western Asia						
Immigration policy	8	0	33	33	33	8
Emigration policy	25	17	17	8	17	0
Central and Southern Asia**						
Immigration policy	20	20	60	80	60	60
Emigration policy	0	0	20	40	40	20
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*						
Immigration policy	0	0	86	71	29	43
Emigration policy	29	14	29	29	29	14
Latin America and the Caribbean*						
Immigration policy	36	43	50	43	36	21
Emigration policy	14	14	14	7	29	7
Oceania						
Immigration policy	11	33	100	78	89	67
Emigration policy	56	44	11	22	11	11
Europe and Northern America						
Immigration policy	45	48	90	55	35	6
Emigration policy	26	23	13	10	10	0

Table A.5. Percentage of Governments that view the number of migrants in an irregular situation in their country as a matter of concern, by region, 2019

	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern or data not available
World	68	25	7
Sub-Saharan Africa	76	24	0
Northern Africa and Western Asia	33	33	33
Central and Southern Asia**	60	40	0
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	71	29	0
Latin America and the Caribbean*	86	0	14
Oceania	78	22	0
Europe and Northern America	61	32	6

Table A.6. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to address irregular immigration and promote regular migration, by region, 2019

	System to monitor visa overstay	Pre-arrival authorization controls	Provisions for unaccompanied minors or separated children	Migration information and awareness-raising campaigns	Formal mechanisms for regularization of legal status of migrants in an irregular situation	Penalties for employers of migrants in an irregular situation	Fines or imprisonment/confinement of migrants in an irregular situation
World	75	76	84	80	65	80	75
Sub-Saharan Africa	70	70	82	76	70	67	73
Northern Africa and Western Asia	75	67	75	67	58	50	67
Central and Southern Asia**	100	100	80	80	60	100	100
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	86	71	57	86	71	100	100
Latin America and the Caribbean*	86	79	93	86	93	71	43
Oceania	89	67	67	67	78	100	89
Europe and Northern America	65	84	97	90	45	97	81

Table A.7. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, by region, 2019

	Prevention	Prosecution or criminalization	Protection or assistance to victims
World			
Trafficking in persons	95	93	95
Migrant smuggling	74	76	60
Sub-Saharan Africa			
Trafficking in persons	94	91	94
Migrant smuggling	79	76	67
Northern Africa and Western Asia			
Trafficking in persons	83	92	92
Migrant smuggling	42	58	25
Central and Southern Asia**			
Trafficking in persons	100	100	100
Migrant smuggling	40	60	60
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*			
Trafficking in persons	100	100	86
Migrant smuggling	100	86	71
Latin America and the Caribbean*			
Trafficking in persons	93	79	93
Migrant smuggling	64	57	57
Oceania			
Trafficking in persons	100	100	100
Migrant smuggling	89	89	89
Europe and Northern America			
Trafficking in persons	97	97	100
Migrant smuggling	81	87	58

Table A.8. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to respond to refugees and other persons forcibly displaced across international borders, by region, 2019

	System for receiving, processing and identifying those forced to flee across international borders	Contingency planning for displaced populations in terms of basic needs such as food, sanitation, education and medical care	Specific measures to provide assistance to citizens residing abroad in countries in crisis or post-crisis situations	A national disaster risk reduction strategy with specific provisions for addressing the displacement impacts of disasters	Grant permission for temporary stay or temporary protection for those forcibly displaced across international borders and those unable to return
World	84	75	68	56	84
Sub-Saharan Africa	91	82	79	73	85
Northern Africa and Western Asia	58	75	50	42	58
Central and Southern Asia**	100	100	60	60	100
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	57	43	71	57	71
Latin America and the Caribbean*	86	71	64	43	79
Oceania	67	44	56	67	78
Europe and Northern America	94	81	68	45	97

Table A.9. Percentage of Governments that reported providing non-nationals equal access to services, welfare benefits and rights, by legal immigration status and region, 2019

	Essential and/ or emergency health care	Public education	Equal pay for equal work	Social security	Access to justice
World					
Yes, all	86	62	39	22	82
Yes, legal	8	29	46	62	11
No or no data available	5	9	15	16	7
Sub-Saharan Africa					
Yes, all	85	64	39	27	79
Yes, legal	6	27	42	48	15
No or no data available	9	9	18	24	6
Northern Africa and Western Asia					
Yes, all	75	42	33	17	75
Yes, legal	17	25	17	42	8
No or no data available	8	33	50	42	17
Central and Southern Asia**					
Yes, all	80	60	20	0	60
Yes, legal	20	40	80	80	40
No or no data available	0	0	0	20	0
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*					
Yes, all	100	57	29	14	86
Yes, legal	0	43	57	86	14
No or no data available	0	0	14	0	0
Latin America and the Caribbean*					
Yes, all	93	79	57	43	86
Yes, legal	0	14	36	50	7
No or no data available	7	7	7	7	7
Oceania					
Yes, all	78	56	44	22	78
Yes, legal	11	22	33	67	11
No or no data available	11	22	22	11	11
Europe and Northern America					
Yes, all	90	65	35	13	90
Yes, legal	10	35	61	81	3
No or no data available	0	0	3	6	6

Table 10.A. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to combat discrimination against migrants, by region, 2019

	Criminalize public incitement of violence or hatred directed against migrants	Count xenophobia and racism among the aggravating circumstances of a crime	Provide protection and legal assistance to victims of hate crimes against migrants	Provide formal training to law enforcement and other public officials to identify, prevent and respond to hate crimes against migrants
World	73	68	73	67
Sub-Saharan Africa	76	76	76	64
Northern Africa and Western Asia	67	50	50	50
Central and Southern Asia**	60	60	40	40
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	86	29	71	43
Latin America and the Caribbean*	57	64	71	71
Oceania	56	44	78	67
Europe and Northern America	84	87	84	84

Table 11.A. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to maximize the positive development impact of migration and the socioeconomic well-being of migrants, by region, 2019

	Align, through periodic assessments, labour migration policies with actual and projected labour market needs	Facilitate the portability of social security benefits	Facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad	Facilitate or promote the flow of remittances	Promote fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers
World	66	60	81	67	78
Sub-Saharan Africa	48	39	82	79	76
Northern Africa and Western Asia	50	42	67	58	58
Central and Southern Asia**	100	60	80	80	100
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	86	100	86	71	100
Latin America and the Caribbean*	57	71	79	79	64
Oceania	67	56	89	89	100
Europe and Northern America	84	77	84	42	81

Table 12.A. Percentage of Governments that reported having policy measures to encourage or facilitate diaspora investment, by region, 2019

	Tax exemptions or other financial incentives	Preferential treatment in providing credit	Preferential treatment in allotment of permits and licences	Transferability of financial assets	Streamlined bureaucratic procedures
World	37	22	26	41	45
Sub-Saharan Africa	45	24	39	58	61
Northern Africa and Western Asia	25	25	25	33	33
Central and Southern Asia**	60	60	60	80	80
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia*	71	43	43	57	57
Latin America and the Caribbean*	64	29	21	36	57
Oceania	33	22	22	67	33
Europe and Northern America	10	3	6	13	23

Notes

The designations employed in this publication and the material presented in it do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

In the tables, data for countries have been grouped into geographic regions based on the classification being used to track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (see: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/>).

The designation of “more developed” and “less developed” regions is intended for statistical purposes and does not express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. More developed regions comprise all regions of Europe plus Northern America, Australia and New Zealand and Japan. Less developed regions comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), and Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Regions with less than 50 per cent country coverage are denoted with an asterisk ‘*’ symbol.

Regions for which data are available for less than 50 per cent of countries and for less than 50 per cent of the total population are denoted with a double asterisk ‘**’ symbol.



When supported by appropriate policies, international migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. Target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a non-legally binding framework for international cooperation among all relevant actors on migration, also recognized that migration is a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development and that these positive impacts can be optimized by improving migration governance.

This publication presents the highlights of the report *World Population Policies 2019*. It provides an overview of Government policies and programmes related to international migration, including policies to govern immigration and to address irregular migration. It reviews policy measures related to migrants' rights, including access to services, as well as policies to foster the integration of migrants into host societies. It also examines Government measures to maximize the development impacts of migration and to support diaspora investment and migrant return.

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